

REMARKS

Claims 1-29 are pending, claims 24-29 having been added by the present amendment. Claims 7 and 18 were amended to correct typographical informalities. Claims 1, 12, and 18 were amended to further describe the operation of the claimed inventions.

In the action mailed December 31, 2003, independent claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,393,026 to Irwin (hereinafter "Irwin"). The rejection contends that any of Irwin's slave nodes constitute an intermediate component that bridges a first component and a second component to forward data in a manner that does not require a routing table lookup.

Applicant respectfully disagrees with this assertion and with the rejection. Claim 1 deals with an apparatus that includes a first component configured to forward data based on a lookup in a routing table and to label the data with information identifying a second component, a the second component configured to receive the data, and an intermediate component bridging the first component and the second component to forward the data based on the information and in a manner that does not require a routing table lookup.

Irwin's slave nodes are part of a parallel processing array. See, e.g., Irwin, col. 7, line 20-23 and col. 8, line 12-17. The centralized master node always receives all data

packets (col. 4, line 29-30) and then delegates processing procedures involving the data packets to slave nodes (col. 4, line 33-35). According to Irwin, these procedures include "translation of a header of the data packet to identify suitable routes, classification of a packet flow according to source and destination addresses, type of service route pruning, metric route pruning, policy route pruning, option processing, congestion control, scheduling, and performance monitoring." See Irwin, col. 5, line 49-55.

Since these procedures are distributed across Irwin's array, at least some of these slave nodes are explicitly required to perform a routing table lookup. Moreover, nothing in Irwin describes or suggests that other slave nodes (i.e., those that are not explicitly required to perform procedures) do not use require a routing table lookup to forward data packets.

Further, since the routing procedures are distributed across Irwin's array, no component labels a packet with information identifying a second component that is to receive the data, as in claim 1. Rather, such information appears to be obtained by Irwin's slave nodes from the original data packet received by the master.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that claim 1 and the claims dependent therefrom are allowable.

Also, given Irwin's master/slave arrangement, the data packets in Irwin enter and leave the system only through the master node(s). Therefore, the position of the first, second, and intermediate components in the network element do not change based on a path of the data. In contrast, new claims 24, 26, and 28 recite that the position of the first, the second, and the intermediate component change based on a path of the data..

Independent claims 12 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Irwin and U.S. Patent No. 6,249,820 to Dobbins et al. (hereinafter "Dobbins"). Claim 12 relates to a method that includes labeling data with information identifying a second component and forwarding data, without performing a lookup in the routing table, through an intermediate component. Claim 18 relates to an article that stores machine-executable instructions for causing a machine to label data with information identifying a second component and forward data, without looking up the routing table, through an intermediate component.

As discussed above, Irwin explicitly requires at least some of his slave nodes to perform a routing table lookup and neither describes or suggests that other slave nodes do not use require a routing table lookup to forward data packets. Further, none

of Irwin's nodes label a packet with information identifying a second component that is to receive the packet.

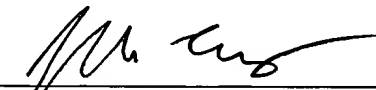
Dobbins fails to address these deficiencies in Irwin. Instead, Dobbins describes that even distributed forwarding service agents are to access a common forwarding table 120 to resolve destination IP addresses or next hops. See, e.g., col. 10, line 13-40.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that claims 12 and 18, along with the claims dependent therefrom, are allowable.

Applicant asks that all claims be allowed. Enclosed is a check for the Petition for Extension of Time fee and for the excess claims fee. Please apply any other charges or credits to Deposit Account No. 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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